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SUBJECT: GRATEFUL MOD PROMISES PROGRESS ON SECURITY
ASSISTANCE

Classified By: Ambassador Donald E. Booth, reasons 1.4, b/d.

¶1. (SBU) In an introductory meeting with Defence Minister George Mpombo, Ambassador noted the usefulness of the U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) programs for recipient countries. He regretted that delays had hindered some of the training available to Zambia defense forces and urged the GRZ to be frank about what assistance would be useful in order that U.S. assistance could be tailored in a mutually beneficial way. The Ambassador suggested that perhaps Zambia would be interested in training for niche capabilities that were always in high demand for peacekeeping operations.

¶2. (SBU) MOD Mpombo noted the "profound historical ties" between Zambia and the United States and expressed gratitude for the U.S. assistance offered to Zambia over the years. He noted that in this economic crisis, foreign assistance was even more important than usual to developing countries and expressed hope that current levels of aid would be maintained, despite the USG's own problems. In the meantime, the GRZ was trying to diversify the Zambian economy into tourism and other areas. Turning to security assistance (finally), Mpombo assured the Ambassador that the GRZ valued ACOTA training, equipment, IMET training, and PEPFAR programs sponsored by the USG. He underscored a GRZ desire to deepen cooperation and to "benefit from technological advances by working with U.S. forces." Mpombo committed to expediting U.S.-Zambian cooperation, urging the Ambassador to just "pick up the phone" if there was a problem and noting that "procrastination is the thief of time."

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador asked Mpombo to set a date for planning the next round of ACOTA training, to continue its support for counterterrorism, and to take a fresh look at the U.S. request for an arrangement on the status of U.S. forces in Zambia. Mpombo replied that Zambia's commitment to counterterrorism was unwavering and expressed interest in looking at a status of forces arrangement with a "fresh approach." He committed his staff to following up with notes on what training/equipment Zambia would be interested in and what status of forces issues needed to be considered.

¶4. (C) Comment: The MOD's logistical weaknesses and its inability to gather and billet troops for training have delayed the second stage of ACOTA training beyond a reasonable period. In addition, the GRZ's insistence that its approximately 500 deployed PKO forces have "overstretched" its 20,000 security forces frustrate our efforts to recruit Zambian participation in desperately needed African PKOs. Both of these excuses defy credibility when one considers that the MOD receives an astonishing 7 percent of the GRZ's budget while producing an abysmal 2.5 percent deployability rate. Mpombo's enthusiasm for security assistance cooperation is encouraging, but his interest in serving his political masters was made clear by his echoing the now common refrain about maintaining foreign assistance levels. Whether his interest in developing his defense forces is sincere will only be clear if his staff's actions begin to reflect Mpombo's stated enthusiasm. We will hold MOD's feet to the fire on ACOTA, PKO participation, and a SOFA and not hesitate to remind MOD contacts of Mpombo's

guidance if necessary.

BOOTH